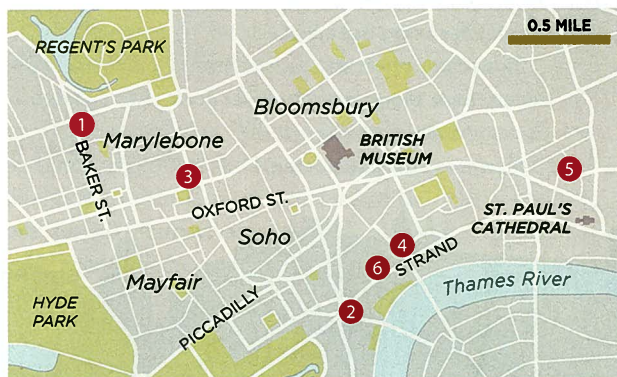


*Lippincott's* June 1890 issue. And Conan Doyle agreed to produce a second novel starring his ace detective; *The Sign of Four* would cement his reputation. Indeed, critics have speculated that the encounter with Wilde, an exponent of a literary movement known as the Decadents, led Conan Doyle to deepen and darken Sherlock Holmes' character: in *The Sign of Four's* opening scene, Holmes is revealed to be addicted to a "seven-percent solution" of cocaine.

Today the Langham Hotel sits atop Regent Street like a grand yet faded dowager, conjuring up a mostly vanished Victorian landscape. The interior has been renovated repeatedly over the past century. But the Langham's exterior—monolithic sandstone facade, with wrought-iron balconies, French windows and a columned portico—has hardly changed since the evening Conan Doyle visited 120 years ago. Roger Johnson, publicity director of the Sherlock Holmes Society of London, a 1,000-strong band of Holmes devotees, points to the hotel's mention in several Holmes tales, including *The Sign of Four*, and says it's a kind of shrine for Sherlockians. "It's one of those places where the worlds of Conan Doyle and Sherlock Holmes come together," he adds. Others include the Lyceum Theatre, where one of Conan Doyle's plays was produced (and a location in *The Sign of Four*), as well as the venerable gentlemen's clubs along the thoroughfare of the Strand, establishments that Conan Doyle frequented during forays into the city from his estate in Surrey. Conan Doyle also appropriated St. Bartholomew's Hospital in central London as a setting; it was there that the legendary initial meeting between Holmes and Dr. Watson took place.

ARTHUR IGNATIUS CONAN DOYLE was born on May 22, 1859, in Edinburgh, Scotland, the son of Charles Doyle, an alcoholic who would spend much of his later life in a mental institution, and Mary Foley Doyle, the attractive, lively daughter of an Irish doctor and a teacher; she loved litera-



#### KEY TO SITES

- 1 Sherlock Holmes Museum
- 2 The Sherlock Holmes pub
- 3 Langham Hotel
- 4 The Lyceum Theatre
- 5 St. Bartholomew's Hospital
- 6 Rules restaurant

#### GREATER LONDON



MAPS: GUILBERT GATES

